

I think we would all agree that we are most fortunate to be alive at this moment in history. We end this century and the millennium with soaring optimism. Never before has our Nation enjoyed, at once, so much prosperity, social progress, and national self-confidence, with so little internal crisis or external threat. Never before have we had such a blessed opportunity and, therefore, such a profound responsibility to build the more perfect Union of our Founders' dreams.

When our children's children look back on this century, they will see that this hopeful and promising time was earned by the bravery and hard work of men and women who, in the words of our great poet laureate, Robert Pinsky, did not merely celebrate our oldest ideals like trophies under glass but kept them bright with use. They will see this moment was earned through the hard-won fight for freedom, from the beachheads of Normandy to the buses of Montgomery to the villages of Kosovo. At home and abroad, it has been our great privilege to advance the light of human liberty.

They will see this moment was earned through the drive for discovery. At the outset of the century, not even the most farsighted of our forebears could have predicted all the miracles of science that have emerged from our labs: antibiotics and vaccines, silicon chips and the Internet, microscopes that envision the infinitesimal, and telescopes that elucidate the infinite, soon-to-be complete blueprint for human life itself.

And they will see that this moment was earned through a passion for creativity. National power may spring from economic and military might, but the greatness of a nation emanates from the life of the mind and the stirrings of the soul. So many of you have contributed to that greatness, and we are all grateful.

In this century, American artists of the page and the canvas, the stage and screen, have drawn from our diverse palate of cultural traditions and given the world a great gift of uniquely American creations with universal and timeless appeal.

The new century and the new millennium will bring a cascade of new triumphs. We see new hope for peace in lands bedeviled by ancient hatreds, new technologies both

opening the storehouse of human knowledge for people across the globe and offering the promise of alleviating the poverty that still haunts so many millions of our children. We see scientists rapidly approaching the day when newborns can expect to live well past 100 years, and children will know cancer only as a constellation of stars. But by far, my most solemn prayer for this new millennium is that we will find, somehow, the strength and wisdom in our hearts to keep growing together, first, as one America and then as one people on this ever smaller planet we all call home.

If you look at the glowing diversity of race and background that illuminates America's house on this evening, a vivid illustration, we see that human capacity is distributed equally across the human landscape, I cannot help but think how different America is, how different history is, and how much better, because those of you in this room and those you represent were able to imagine, to invent, to inspire. And by the same token, I cannot help but dream of how much different and how much better our future can be if we can give every child the same chance to live up to his or her God-given potential and to live together as brothers and sisters, celebrating our common humanity and our shared destiny.

This is the future I hope every American will take a moment to imagine on this millennial evening. This is the future I pray we can all join together to build. So I ask you to join me in a toast—to yourselves, to the First Lady, and to our shared future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:02 p.m. on the State Floor at the White House. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at the "America's Millennium" Celebration

December 31, 1999

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we celebrate. The change of centuries, the dawning of a new millennium are now just minutes away. We celebrate the past. We have honored America's remarkable achievements, struggles, and triumphs in the 20th century.

We celebrate the future, imagining an even more remarkable 21st century.

As we marvel at the changes of the last hundred years, we dream of what changes the next hundred and the next thousand will bring. And as powerful as our memories are, our dreams must be even stronger. For when our memories outweigh our dreams, we become old, and it is the eternal destiny of America to remain forever young, always reaching beyond, always becoming, as our Founders pledged, "a more perfect Union." So we Americans must not fear change. Instead, let us welcome it, embrace it, and create it.

The great story of the 20th century is the triumph of freedom and free people, a story told in the drama of new immigrants, the struggles for equal rights, the victories over totalitarianism, the stunning advances in economic well-being, in culture, in health, in space and telecommunications, and in building a world in which more than half the people live under governments of their own choosing for the first time in all history. We must never forget the meaning of the 20th century or the gifts of those who worked and marched, who fought and died for the triumph of freedom.

So as we ring in this new year, in a new century, in a new millennium, we must, now and always, echo Dr. King in the words of the old American hymn, "Let freedom ring."

If the story of the 20th century is the triumph of freedom, what will the story of the 21st century be? Let it be the triumph of freedom wisely used, to bring peace to a world in which we honor our differences, and even more, our common humanity. Such a triumph will require great efforts from us all.

It will require us to stand against the forces of hatred and bigotry, terror and destruction. It will require us to continue to prosper, to alleviate poverty, to better balance the demands of work and family, and to serve each of us in our communities. It will require us to take better care of our environment. It will require us to make further breakthroughs in science and technology, to cure dread diseases, heal broken bodies, lengthen life, and unlock secrets from global warming to the black holes in the universe. And perhaps most important, it will require us to

share with our fellow Americans and, increasingly, with our fellow citizens of the world, the economic benefits of globalization, the political benefits of democracy and human rights, the educational and health benefits of all things modern, from the Internet to the genetic encyclopedia to the mysteries beyond our solar system.

Now, we may not be able to eliminate all hateful intolerance, but we can develop a healthy intolerance of bigotry, oppression, and abject poverty. We may not be able to eliminate all the harsh consequences of globalization, but we can communicate more and travel more and trade more, in a way that lifts the lives of ordinary working families everywhere, and the quality of our global environment.

We may not be able to eliminate all the failures of government and international institutions, but we can certainly strengthen democracy so all children are prepared for the 21st century world and protected from its harshest side effects. And we can do so much more to work together, to cooperate among ourselves, to seize the problems and the opportunities of this ever small planet we all call home. In short, if we want the story of the 21st century to be the triumph of peace and harmony, we must embrace our common humanity and our shared destiny.

Now, we're just moments from that new millennium. Two centuries ago, as the framers were crafting our Constitution, Benjamin Franklin was often seen in Independence Hall looking at a painting of the Sun low on the horizon. When, at long last, the Constitution finally was signed, Mr. Franklin, said, "I have often wondered whether that Sun was rising or setting. Today I have the happiness to know it is a rising Sun." Well, two centuries later, we know the Sun will always rise on America, as long as each new generation lights the fire of freedom. Our children are ready. So, again, the torch is passed to a new century of young Americans.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 p.m. at the Lincoln Memorial. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 1, 2000

The President. Good morning, and Happy New Year—or, we should say, happy new millennium. Last night Hillary and I joined thousands of Americans on the National Mall to bid farewell to the remarkable century just past and to welcome the new millennium. The feelings of good will and hope that overcame us all will be among our most treasured moments, and we're deeply grateful that the celebrations were both jubilant and peaceful here, and all around the world.

The First Lady. But our celebration didn't just begin at the stroke of midnight, nor will it end today. Two years ago the President and I launched the White House Millennium Project to inspire all Americans to reflect on where we have been as a nation, who we are, and what we want to be, a project "to honor the past and imagine the future."

I've traveled all across our country, encouraging citizens and communities to think of the gifts that America can give to the future, whether it's saving our historic treasures such as the Declaration of Independence or Thomas Edison's invention factory or the pueblos of the American Southwest, opening trails and planting millions of trees for future generations to enjoy, or teaching our schoolchildren to value their own families' and America's immigrant past. The President and I invite you to join these and so many other efforts to extend our celebration far into the new year and the new century.

The President. What is perhaps most remarkable about last night's celebration is the way it was shared all around the world. Millions of Americans, and billions of others across the globe, watched on television as midnight broke first in Asia, then in Europe, then Africa, South America, finally, here in North America.

That people all over the planet could experience the same events at the same time would have been impossible for anyone to imagine a thousand years ago, even a hundred. Yet, the growing interconnectedness of the world today—thanks to a global economy and technologies like the Internet—is more

than just a mark of how far we've come. It's the key to understanding where we're going and what we must do in the new millennium.

It's clear that our fate in America increasingly will be tied to the fate of other nations and other people around the world. We must have prosperous partners to trade with, secure democracies to share the burdens of peacekeeping, and mutual effort to combat challenges that know no borders, from terrorism to environmental destruction. To advance our interests and protect our values in this new, interconnected world, America clearly must remain engaged. We must help to shape events and not be shaped by them.

The First Lady. Yet, it is not just by our exertions abroad but by the example we set here at home that we can influence the world for the better. For in the new millennium, the world will be looking to America for leadership in meeting our great common challenges.

If we in America can extend prosperity to people and places in this country that have not yet felt it, then perhaps the global economy can bring a better life to the 1.4 billion people who live on less than one dollar a day. If we in America can provide all of our children with a world-class education, then perhaps it will be possible, in the not-too-distant future, for every child in the world to have a good education. And if we can build one America and make our diversity our greatest strength, then perhaps other nations will see the advantage of working to overcome their own ethnic and religious tensions.

The President. We begin the 21st century well poised to be that guiding light. Seldom in our history and never in my lifetime has our Nation enjoyed such a combination of widespread economic success, social solidarity, and national self-confidence, without an internal crisis or an overarching external threat. Never has the openness and dynamism of our society been more emulated by other countries. Never have our values of freedom, democracy, and opportunity been more ascendant in the world.

Nearly 55 years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt said that "we cannot live alone at peace . . . our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away," and, therefore, that we must be "citizens of